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CASABLANCA FOR CG, RSO, AND CONSULAR

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [MO](#)

SUBJECT: OSAC/CRIME SAFETY REPORT FOR MOROCCO

REF: 06 STATE 199547

11. (U) The following information is keyed to requirements posed in reftel.

1I. CRIME/SAFETY: Though crime has generally not posed a significant risk to visitors in terms of personal safety, it is necessary to take prudent security precautions appropriate for any major American city. The U.S. Mission has noticed an increase in crime throughout Morocco. Most criminal incidents perpetrated against visitors are non-confrontational, although violent crimes occur. Pick-pocketing and purse/valuable snatching remain the most reported type of incident, generally occurring in crowded city centers, medinas, or high volume pedestrian streets. Theft of items from occupied vehicles occurring at traffic lights or while stopped in heavy traffic appears also to be on the rise. However, there are indications, particularly in larger cities, that criminals are becoming more brazen and willing to confront victims or use weapons. Some of these incidents have occurred in broad daylight in the nicer neighborhoods in Casablanca and Rabat. Though the use of firearms is rare, street robberies, generally carried out at night, are being reported more frequently. In some cases, the perpetrator has brandished a knife or bladed instrument to ensure quick compliance. While some of these acts are random, police have arrested organized groups carrying out more sophisticated targeting of individuals, homes or businesses.

Morocco experiences a high number of traffic accidents and fatalities every year due to both road conditions and driving habits. Though there is a major effort underway to enforce speed limits and rules of the road, it remains an area where visitors should exercise great care. Police have established a number of checkpoints in an effort to validate driving permits and the safety condition of vehicles. If pulled over for a traffic violation, the driver must be able to provide a passport and/or international driver's license. Confiscation of the driver's license is possible if the violator is unable or unwilling to settle the fine at the time of the traffic stop. Taxi and bus drivers, particularly those transporting multiple persons between cities, may operate poorly maintained and overcrowded vehicles in a reckless manner.

II. TERRORISM/POLITICAL VIOLENCE: In March and April 2007 there were a series of terrorist bombings in Casablanca. In August a suicide bomber targeted a tourist bus unsuccessfully in Meknes. The potential for terrorist violence against American interests and citizens remains high in Morocco. There is draft GOM legislation that has earmarked 30 per cent of the State's 2008 budget for security. Moroccan security services continue to disrupt terrorist cells throughout Morocco. The terrorist groups arrested over the past several years have generally been associated with radical Islamic

extremism, and some have been associated with regional and international terrorist groups. Moroccans who have emigrated have been implicated in terrorist attacks abroad, such as the Madrid train bombings. Additionally, issues such as U.S. Middle East policy and the war in Iraq have on occasion generated large public protests. Politically inspired protests are more likely to occur in the city center or near Moroccan government or internationally-affiliated facilities.

For the most part, these gatherings have remained peaceful and well-controlled and groups are not normally allowed to congregate in the vicinity of diplomatic facilities. Groups are required to obtain government approval prior to holding any public rally, march or protest. A spontaneous or non-approved demonstration may pose greater potential for political violence than those that are approved beforehand that allow police to set parameters and maintain control. Clashes have occurred at universities between factions over the status of the Western Sahara, which remains a politically charged regional issue.

III. POST-SPECIFIC CONCERNS: Visitors traveling to Morocco on business should be aware that English is not widely spoken and that most business transactions are normally conducted in French, although Arabic is the most widely spoken language in Morocco. Since Morocco is an Islamic country, it is also beneficial and recommended for visitors to be aware of cultural sensitivities associated with Islam.

During the rainy season, from November to March, flash flooding can impact Morocco's many rural mountainous roads and pose a threat to travelers as flooding can quickly wash away a road.

IV. POLICE RESPONSE: The Moroccan police force is patterned on the French system, with the Surete National enforcing law in the urban areas, and the Gendarmerie in the rural areas. Moroccan law enforcement officers are relatively well trained, and law enforcement officials have pursued additional training and expertise through international exchanges and training assistance programs. The Moroccan police generally respond effectively to a report of crime by a foreigner visiting the country. Quick investigative reaction to a criminal complaint by a visitor has at times resulted in an immediate arrest. It is important therefore to report any incident quickly to the police. Moroccan police normally conduct business in either French or Arabic. English translation may not be immediately available. Should an American visitor require additional assistance, s/he should contact American Citizens Services at the U.S. Consulate in Casablanca.

V. MEDICAL EMERGENCIES: Adequate medical care is available in Morocco's largest cities, particularly in Rabat and Casablanca, although not all facilities are of the highest quality. Specialized care or treatment may not be available.

Medical facilities are adequate for non-emergency matters, particularly in the urban areas, but most medical staff will have limited or no English skills. Most ordinary prescription and over-the-counter medicines are widely available. However, specialized prescriptions may be difficult to fill and availability of medicines in rural areas is unreliable. Emergency and specialized care outside the major cities is far below U.S. standards, and in many instances may not be available at all. In the event of car accidents involving injuries, immediate ambulance service usually is not available. The numbers below represent a sample of medical services available and should not be interpreted as necessarily recommended by the U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

Police Emergency Service - 190
Fire Department/Emergency Ambulance - 150

Private Ambulance Service - 037-72-72-72 (Rabat),
022-25-25-25 (Casablanca)

Air Ambulance Service (Rota, Spain) 0034-56-82-3555

Private Clinics and Hospitals:

Agdal Clinic (Rabat) 037-77-77-77

Nations Unies Clinic (Rabat) 037-67-05-05

Dar Assalam Clinic (Casablanca) 022-85-14-14

Zerkouni Clinic (Casablanca) 022-25-33-00

Polyclinic du Sud (Marrakech) 024-44-79-99 or 061-24-06-78

Assalam Clinic (Tangier) 039-32-25-58

VI. TIPS ON HOW TO AVOID BECOMING A VICTIM: Being well informed, understanding the culture, applying good common sense and practicing sound personal security measures can go a long way in ensuring an incident-free visit to Morocco. Thieves generally scan for easy targets of opportunity; therefore, visitors should avoid drawing undue attention by wearing expensive jewelry, outlandish or descriptive clothing items, or generally appearing unfamiliar with the environment. If a deal sounds too good to be true, it probably is. When unfamiliar with an area (particularly at night), it is advisable to utilize the *petit taxi* service available in all large cities. When driving, windows should be rolled up with doors locked, and it is against the law to drive while talking on a cell phone. Train travel in Morocco is considered safe and reliable. Establishments that could be perceived as catering to U.S. or western interests, such as hotels, clubs, restaurants and movie theaters, could be potential targets for terrorism. Travelers should remain particularly alert and informed during periods of heightened tension in the country or region. The Regional Security Office in Rabat or Casablanca remains the best source of information for the latest on the security situation.

VII. FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: Utilize the Consular Information Sheet at Travel.State.Gov for additional travel information as well as the latest travel warnings and public announcements regarding the security/safety situation in the country or region.

U.S. Embassy - 037-76-22-65

U.S. Embassy (after-hours) - 037-76-96-39

U.S. Consulate General Casablanca - 022-26-45-50

U.S. Consulate General American Citizen Services -
022-43-05-78

When dialing Morocco from the U.S. dial the country code 212 and drop the first 0 of the number.

Regional Security Officer Rabat: George G. Frederick
Assistant Regional Security Officer Rabat: Theodore O. Holmes
Regional Security Officer Casablanca: Yvon Guillaume
Chief, Consular Section: Miguel Ordonez
Commercial Officer: Rick Ortiz.

Visit Embassy Rabat's Classified Website;
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/rabat>

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